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THE
CASTLE OF MONTVAL,
A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS,
AS IT IS NOW PERFORMING
WITH UNIVERSAL APPLAUSE

AT THE
THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE,

BY THE REV. T. S. WHALLEY.

Second Edition.

L O N D O N :

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TO MRS. SIDDONS.

DEAR MADAM,

AS the Castle of Montval owes its favourable reception by the Public entirely to your matchless exertions, its dedication to you would be a debt of gratitude, were it not one of friendship. If the audience has been enchanted with your performance of a part, which was written solely for *you*, what must the Author's sensations have been, who felt that the zeal of the friend gave an higher tone and colouring to the enthusiasms of the actress.

I presume not to divide the palm with you, but when wreathed round your brow, I *may* be proud that its graceful honours owe some-

b

thing

thing to a Drama, which you inspired, and which, through you, will afford lasting satisfaction to,

Dear Madam,

Your obliged and faithful Friend, &c. &c.

THOS. S. WHALLEY.

PREFACE.

THE following tragedy is founded on a well-known fact, which happened, the author believes, somewhere in the South of France, and so recently as in the year Eighty-three. The old count in question, had been immured in a secret dungeon six years, by his cruel son, and a confidential villain who had been bred up in the castle, when he was accidentally discovered by a nobleman who was the old count's particular friend. Not having heard of the count's supposed death (owing to a long absence from France), he unexpectedly arrived to pass a few days with him, when the castle was so full of guests, that the old count's bed-chamber was the only one unoccupied. This chamber communicated with the dungeon by a secret door, concealed by tapestry; and through the hurry attending the revelry in the castle, had been left open by the young count's abominable agent, the evening his father's old friend was to sleep in a room which had been carefully shut up till that night, ever since the count's supposed decease. In the course of

the night, the noble guest, awakened by a noise in the chamber, discovered his old friend, and an explanation taking place, the officers of justice were, unexpectedly, called in the next day from a neighbouring city: the old count was liberated, but, too feeble to bear such a sudden change, died in a few days; his execrable son was condemned to be imprisoned for his life, which would not have been spared, but at the powerful intercession of his noble relations, who, according to the laws of France, would have been disgraced and degraded by his public and merited execution. The part of the countess, with some others, have been imagined by the author, to form a plot fit for the stage; and to give it all the advantages of Mrs. Siddons's unrivalled performance. How well she has justified his hopes, the public, whom she has enchanted with her transcendent efforts, knows; but it cannot know how much she has surpassed his highest expectations in a part, which, as it was only written for her, so she only could have given it such wonderful force and effect.

It has been supposed by some, that the author borrowed his plot partly from the Robbers, and partly from the Castle Spectre. The plain and honest narrative he has given will, he trusts, vindicate him from this imagined

gined imitation. Indeed his tragedy was written some time before he read the play of the Robbers, and as it was in the hands of the managers of Drury-lane Theatre very early in May 1797, no part of it could have been stolen from the Castle Spectre, which was put into their hands some time after, and which ought, in justice, to have succeeded, and not preceded, the Castle of Montval on the stage.

The AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE BY THE AUTHOR.

Spoken by Mr. POWELL.

A TRAGEDY again?—Aye, he may try,
With dagger, strut, and rant, to make us cry ;
But all his efforts, and his kill, kill, kill !
Shall never make us weep against our will :
We love to laugh!—then, pray, why here to night?
Can it be out of whim, or out of spight?
I'll not believe it ; Britons are too kind,
Too generous, to betray a grov'ling mind !
Some critic fly, or poet in a corner,
May, here and there, perhaps, perform the scorne,
And come resolv'd to damn : since wits, they say,
Like hungry wolves, for want of other prey,
On their own kind will turn ; and thro' the town,
To gaol from garret, hunt each other down.
But yet—tho' authors are so hard of heart---
Ye, gentle fair, will act a gentler part ;
And have your farts and handkerchiefs prepar'd
For tears, which are the poet's best reward.
And sympathetic beaux can't fail to cry
At your command, and utter sigh for sigh.
From you, O gallery gods ! there's nought to fear,
If genuine pathos calls the genuine tear :
Nor will the judgment of the pit refuse
Enlighten'd plaudits to the tragic muse,
If Nature, leagu'd with Pity, plays her part,
To agitate the pulses of the heart.
Howe'er the author in his part may fail,
Truth has supply'd the subject of his tale.

Gallia—

Gallia—where all to mad excess is borne ;
Where ev'ry tie of God and man is torn ;
Where suff'ring virtue lifts her hands in vain,
And cheated freedom drags his iron chain—
Gallia supply'd the story, which, to-night,
With tender sympathy and sad delight,
If hope decisive not, thro' our cares, shall claim,
And your applause, one laurel leaf from fame ;
One leaf, if haply one ungather'd grows,
To wreath our naval heroes' gallant brows,

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT of MONTVAL,

Mr. HOLLAND.

MARQUIS of VAUBLANE,

Mr. C. KEMBLE.

COUNT of COLMAR,

Mr. AICKIN.

OLD COUNT,

Mr. KEMBLE.

MONS. LAPONT,

Mr. BARRYMORE.

BLAISE, the old Steward of the Castle,

Mr. PACKER.

COUNTESS of MONTVAL,

Mrs. SIDDONS.

The LADY MATILDA, her Cousin,

Mrs. POWELL.

TERESA, Woman to the Countess,

Mrs. HEARD.

Scene lies in Dauphiny, in the South of France.

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL

CASTLE OF MONTVAL.

SCENE I—*A handsome Antichamber in the Castle.*

Enter TERESA and BLAISE, talking.

TERESA. I Cannot think it: sure your former lady
Was far less lovely than my charming mistress !

BLAISE. It may be so in any eyes but mine.
Train'd, from a boy, by her protecting hand ;
Taken from poverty, and rais'd to honor ;
Trusted by her, and by my noble lord ;
My eyes can never see their equals more !
But yet, Teresa, I confess the countess
Reminds me of the beauty now laid low ;
And bears such grace and dignity about her,
As I did never think to see again.

TERESA. Well, worthy Blaise, your gratitude I honor,
Tho' I may doubt your taste.—But the late count ?—

BLAISE. O ! my dear master !—Pray excuse these tears !—
Was goodness, honor, kindness, past my speak-
ing !

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

TERESA.

When did he die?

BLAISE.

About four years ago.

His death was sudden ; and a sudden change—
 To me a sad one, who was wont to think
 That all his wisdom order'd was most right—
 Then happen'd here.

TERESA.

What change, my worthy friend?

BLAISE.

Excess and revelry, for tranquil state :
 The noonday frolic, and the midnight feast,
 For sober cheerfulness, and sober hours ;
 For hospitality, whose even course
 Flow'd always full, yet never ran to waste.
 But I am old : fashions and times are alter'd :
 I shou'd not blame, because I cannot relish
 What my young lord, impell'd by health and spirits,
 Thinks fit to do.—And I've a confidence
 That by your lady much will be reform'd
 That seem'd amiss.—O ! may his actions honor
 His noble parents, and his noble wife !

TERESA.

And so I trust they will : now Heav'n forbids
 Such excellence as her's were thrown away.—
 BLAISE (interrupting her).
 ---What else I said ? --- Young woman do not think
 it !

Wrest not my words ; I pray you wrest them not
 Beyond their meaning ! --- He is gay and young,

And

And youth is lavish, when the tide of fortune ~~full~~
 Draws flatterers round ; a base and busy train !
 But I am wrong again ---we'll hope the best.
 No more ! for see my lady's noble friends.

Enter MATILDA and the MARQUIS.

MARQUIS.

My dear Matilda, let the precious moments
 Which fortune offers, be employ'd to speak
 My constant love and overflowing rapture,
 At meeting thus again ! ---At meeting *thus*,
 After so many tedious months of absence,
 With full allowance from your noble father,
 To urge my wishes and express my joy.

MATILDA.

What shall I answer worthy you and me ?
 Believe my heart responsive to your own ;
 Tho' female delicacy makes my tongue
 Bashful to speak the language it inspires,

MARQUIS.

Long, long I lov'd, without one ray to cheer me !
 Then spare not to enchant a faithful lover,
 Whose thoughts and passion you, for years, have
 known

So fervently devoted to your charms !

MATILDA.

You *know* enough to know what I cou'd say ;
 And feel enough to know what *are* my feelings.
 Content with *this*, press my fond heart no further !

But tell me, how you like the charming countess?
 Tho' short your knowledge, in one transient day,
 To penetrate the virtues of her heart.

MARQUIS.

Enough that knowledge to discern her merit.
 To say she's worthy my Matilda's friendship,
 Speaks all that eloquence *cou'd* say to praise her.

MATILDA.

From longer intimacy you must learn
 Her high perfections.—In her noble soul
 A graceful fortitude, that dares all trial,
 Lives with a tenderness that's all her own.
 Nothing in her, in person or in mind,
 But greatly excellent, and greatly fair.
 Her beauty has a something of divine!
 A dignity, that shews all others mean.
 Was ever such a majesty of eye!
 Such bright effulgence blended with such softness!
 And thus her lofty soul superior shines,
 Among the best and noblest of her sex!
 Attach'd from childhood, and allied by blood,
 My admiration still acquires new force;
 And while I love her *tenderly*, I feel
 An awe and wonder, mingled with affection!—
 But looking *all*, and *more than all*, I've said.—
 The lovely countess comes!

(As Matilda is speaking, the folding Doors of a magnificent Saloon are thrown open, and the Count and Countess, attended by Lapont, advance through them to the Front of the Stage.)

COUNT.

A TRAGEDY.

5

COUNT. My good Lapont, I pray you see that ev'ry thing's in order For my departure.

LAPONT. All shall be prepared. [Exit.

COUNTESS. Join me, my noble friends, join to persuade My dearest lord from quitting this fair mansion!

MATILDA. Quitting this mansion!—We had fondly hop'd That many happy weeks wou'd glide away, Before our friendly party knew division!

COUNT. With grief of heart, alas! I'm forc'd to leave These tranquil joys for hateful occupations. Hateful, alike, to friendship, and to love!

COUNTESS. Indeed, Montval, I cannot take it kind You thus desert me!

COUNT. Why, my soul's delight, Why blame what hard necessity requires?

COUNTESS. What sudden business, thus, shou'd force you back From these calm shades, to *that detested Paris*? The seat of every vice and every crime! Why cannot letters, or some trusty agent?—

COUNT. If it *cou'd* be—if *personal application*, In the great cause, you *know*, I have in hand, Were not demanded—think you I wou'd leave— “Look at your face reflected from that mirror,”

Then

Then think if I *wou'd* leave those heav'nly charms,
For aught of pleasure that the world *can* give !

COUNTESS.

'Tis ever so !—Money's the *bane* of bliss !—
The base alloy of honor, duty, love.

COUNT *agitated.*

Why speak you *thus*?—Has it corrupted me?—
But I will hasten to thy arms again,
And recompence the languishings of absence,
On thy dear bosom !

COUNTESS.

Well! I am your wife!
A poor weak woman; doom'd to acquiesce,
By duty, as by nature.

COUNT.

Take it not so,
My best beloved!—Mine is the cruel task,
Whose only earthly joy is in thy smiles.
Your charming friend, and her deserving marquis,
Shall soothe your widow'd hours.

MATILDA.

The lovely countess,
At all times, may command my services;
The willing tribute of my just devotion.

MARQUIS.

And mine.—And if my pow'r but mate my will,
Your absence, count, tho' not, perhaps, forgotten,
Shall not awaken such severe regret,
To banish mirth, and frown the smiles away.

COUNTESS.

My noble friends, I know your gen'rous hearts,
And

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL.

7

And have a full reliance on your kindness.
Well, well! if you ~~must~~ go, I'll do my best
To soften solitude till your return.—
The proud ancestral oaks that wave around
This tow'ring castle shall assist my musing.
The awful rocks shall tempt my wand'ring feet,
To visit their recesses; and the torrents
Shall deafen my complaints, as they arise.—
But ere you go, allow, at least, the time
To visit every corner of this mansion;
Its gloomy grandeur is in unison
With the sad temper of my pensive mind.

COUNT. (*embarrass'd.*)
At my return! — Time presses —

COUNTESS.
Then old Blaise
Shall be my guide thro' all its labyrinths.

COUNT. (*earnestly.*)
Not so, my dearest love! — Wait my return!
I pray you wait! — Deny me not this pleasure!

COUNTESS.
Nay, in the absence of my honor'd lord,
It were a scrutiny I shou'd little taste.

COUNT.
My soul's best treasure! take, in this embrace,
My stock of pleasure, till we meet again!

COUNTESS.
Beware the syrens of that hateful Paris!
I have a soul that cannot brook a rival,
Nor cou'd descend to a degenerate husband.
My love goes only hand in hand with virtue;

And

an

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

And tho' my heart shou'd burst in the attempt,
I'd tear it from the man I cou'd not honor!

COUNT. Ah! why this earnestness?—You cannot doubt
me!

By this! and this! I'm your's—

COUNTESS (embracing him).

My dear Montval!

My heart can know no joy till your return!

[Exit Count.

I'm strangely mov'd!

MATILDA.

I pray compose your spirits!

Why shou'd you take this journey thus to heart?

Business must sometimes interfere with love:

This transient absence will increase your pleasure,
And zest affection, when the count returns.

COUNTESS.

O! my dear friend, my trembling heart assures me,
It is too tender for my lasting peace.—
Wou'd it were calmer!

MARQUIS.

Say not so, dear lady!

This sensibility so well becomes you,

That it new lustre gives to ev'ry charm.

COUNTESS.

I know your gallantry, and feel your friendship.
But weary as my soul was grown of Paris,
And all its giddy round of dissipation,
I can't endure—when, at my earnest suit,
The count was *badly* won to leave its magic,
And visit once again—with me—his bride—

His

A TRAGEDY.

9

His native shades—I can't endure to see him,

Impatient, thus to hurry back again.

MARQUIS.

Remember, urgent business calls him thither,

Of great importance to your future state;

Else were he much to blame.

COUNTESS.

I know it not.

I heard of no express! I saw no letters!

This sudden recollection does not please me.

But two short days have I enjoy'd him here

(And those have seen him restless, gloomy, absent!)

I! whose fond hopes had pictur'd so much bliss

From this retreat, by *nature* form'd to charm;

And which to *him*, if rightly turn'd his mind,

Shou'd wake a thousand, thousand fond ideas,

From time foregone, and fond habitual feelings!

MATILDA.

No doubt the count, with equal pride and pleasure,

Will haste to join you in his native castle,

And wander, with the idol of his heart,

Thro' the romantic scenery around.

MARQUIS.

Believe he will! He cannot be so cold,

So slow of pulse, amidst his native shades,

To feel no fervor, and express no joy:

Far different is the ardor of his mind.

COUNTESS.

You do him friendly justice—Die the thought

That wou'd debase him!—But, my noble friend,

Can you inform me *who* is this Lapont?

C

MARQUIS.

MARQUIS.

As I have heard, a tenant's orphan son,
 Who foster'd by the hand of the late count,
 Took root within his bosom,
 And made, from early youth, the humble friend,
 Of your dear lord, now claims that honor'd title.

COUNTESS.

He looks unworthy of so high a place.
 His fair demeanour, and obsequious bendings,
 Delight not me.—I like more simple manners.
 Malignant meanings play about his lips ;
 While, ever and anon, upon his brow,
 Bushy and black, dark fraud and passions lour,
 Spite of his caution to conceal their workings.
 How like *you* him ?—

MARQUIS.

In truth I know him not.
 Yet, I am free to think, and free to say,
 He never shou'd have been my chosen friend.

COUNTESS.

Nor shall be Montval's.—Nothing that's ignoble
 Shall win his confidence, or gain his ear,
 I can influence. But more of *this*
 As time shall serve.—To *you*, without reserve,
 I pour out the emotions of my soul.

Enter BLAISE.

The Count of Colmar, madam, waits your presence.

COUNTESS.

I come, good Blaise. (*Exit BLAISE.*) But pray inform
 me, marquis,
 Who is this visitor ?

MARQUIS.

A TRAGEDY.

MARQUIS.

The chosen friend
Of the late count, and worthy well the title.

COUNTESS.

Then go we to him, for I reverence age,
When dignified with honorable virtues.

[Exeunt.

SCENE—Changes to the great gothic Hall of the Castle.

Enter the COUNT and LAPONT, in close Conference.

COUNT.

My good Lapont, remember what I've said!
You know its consequence.

LAPONT.

Count, do not doubt me!
My stake is great as *your's*. But now the money.—
I have an urgent purpose for that sum.

COUNT.

How *can* that be, Lapont? It is not long
Since you receiv'd a liberal supply.
Retain'd, and almost master in this castle,
What pressing wants—

LAPONT.

Ask you, my lord, what wants?
Have I not passions, think you, like your own,
That call, and *loudly* too, for gratification?
Shall I, for ever, eat dependent bread?
Nor while your power with your life remains,
Lay up some store, for my declining years?

C 2

COUNT.

COUNTR.

Nay, my good friend, this heat becomes you not !
 There is the money ; giv'n with free good-will ;
 Tho', think not, if an earthly tomb awaits me,
 That I shou'd leave thy fortunes destitute !

LAPONT.

I dare not run the hazard.

COUNTR.

Dare not run ! —

LAPONT.

Come, come, my lord, we know each other *well* :
 But on such knowledge grows not *confidence*.
 As far as mutual secrets may affect
 Our mutual safety, we *may trust each other*.

COUNTR.

“ The villain ! ” (aside) Well, Lapont, no more of this.
 What *have* I done to waken such suspicion ?
 My gen’rous kindness merits better thoughts.—
 But I must go.—This house to *me* is *hateful*,
 Tho’ it contains the object I adore.—

LAPONT.

Why did you come, then, if your timid heart,
 Relax’d of nerve, starts at its own emotions,
 And dares to *do*, what it not dares to think of ?
 Have you quite lost the firmness of your temper ?

COUNTR.

I scorn my abject soul, yet can’t command it ;
 Deride its childish fears, yet feel them still :
 Absent from hence, I never know these terrors ;
 Nor *here* shou’d know them, if but one event—
 You guess my meaning—set my heart at rest.

LAPONT.

LAPONT.

"Tis marvellous it happen'd not long since!
But it *must* happen soon. Why, then, meanwhile,
Why came you hither, to disturb your peace,
And wake the sleeping torment in your bosom?

COUNT.

The countess, whom I worship—for did ever
Such grace and beauty meet thy dazzled eyes?—
The *countess* wou'd not be denied this boon.
Romantic, ardent, visionary, fond,
She sigh'd to quit the gay and splendid world,
And wander with me, thro' my native shades;
Seeing her bent, past hope, to quit the court,
I press'd a visit to the duke her father,
And feign'd a strong desire to see his castle,
Fam'd for its grandeur, and its wide domain.

LAPONT.

Feign'd a *desire*, where you may well *command*?
What, does a woman govern thus your reason,
And lead her puppet as her fancy leads?
For shame! for shame!—remember you're a *man*!

COUNT.

Form'd to command, and captivate all hearts,
I own, her talents, aided by her charms,
Make me a ready slave to all her wishes:
What once has got possession of her mind,
She follows with such fervency of passion,
As cannot brook controul.—Here, then, she *is*;
But here, tho' sick at heart, to tear me from her,
The world shou'd not induce my longer stay!

She

She soon shall follow me :—I will contrive
To draw her back, by some pretence, to *Paris*.
While she is *bere*, I shall not know repose.
There are the keys; and never may *these bands*
Feel their cold touch, or know *their office* more !

[*Throws down a bunch of keys on a table, and exit*
hastily; LAPONT as hastily following and calling
after him, leaving the keys bebind—

Stay, count !—I must intreat some private converse,
On matters of great moment, ere we part !—

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A magnificent Apartment, where the COUNTESS, the MARQUIS, the COUNT OF COLMAR, and MATILDA, appear conversing.

COUNTESS.

I LOVE to hear these tales of former days,
Which move the mind to useful retrospection,
And seem to give it new and longer being.—
Your rev'rence for my Albert's noble father,
Delights my soul.—Your zeal proclaims his worth.

COUNT OF COLMAR.

It was transcendent! For his noble mind,
Gen'rous as kind, to all around diffus'd
Unnumber'd blessings!—To the rich, and poor,
His gates and hand and heart were ever open,
With courteous dignity, and temper'd state;
That mix'd with liberal plenty, wise expence;
Invited ease, and yet inspir'd respect;
Allur'd to mirth, yet banish'd noisy riot.
He was, what great men shou'd be; what, alas!
I knew, but never hope to know again!—

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

I wonder, Montval, with the nat'ral pride
 A son shou'd feel, offspring of such a father!—
 I wonder that his tongue shou'd not be lavish
 On such a theme!—If I am not mistaken,
 He lost his noble mother when a child.

.1 COUNTESS.

He did: and great the loss! for ne'er was beauty
 Inform'd with clearer sense, or sweeter temper,
 Or deck'd and dignified by higher virtue.

COUNTESS.

I shou'd not grieve that she has long been dead:
 My poor deserts wou'd but have been a foil
 To her endowments.

COLMAR.

O that she had liv'd,
 She and the count, to see their only son
 Mated, with beauty, fortune, virtue, birth, or what baa
 Beyond their highest hopes!

COUNTESS.

You overrate,
 With the warm impulse of a noble mind,
 My humble merits: but inform me, count,
 —For in his absence he must be my theme—
 Did never any difference arise, bas baa
 —Such as, too oft' has ris'n 'twixt youth, and age—
 Between my Albert, and his noble father?

COLMAR.

Nothing of moment:—nought, I trust, that left
 Rankling rememb'rance.—Strict, himself, of morals,—
 Tho' liberal, not profuse—perhaps he thought

His

His son's first burst of manhood rather wild,
And his expence beyond the bounds of prudence :
This, lady, I *have* heard, but this was *all* ;
For never doating parent felt more pride
In a son's talents, and his manly grace,
Than felt the count in your accomplish'd lord's.

COUNTESS.

Thanks, noble sir, for gratifying thus
The fond enquiries of a curious woman ;
Curious to ev'ry, ev'n the least concern,
Of him she loves.—Marquis, *you* also know
My Albert's father ?

MARQUIS.

Late, tho' long enough
To see, and feel his worth. Some six years since,
Upon a visit to a noble kinsman,
I often found admittance in this castle,
And learnt to love, and to revere its lord.

MATILDA.

But, my dear countess, you forget your purpose
To visit the fair terrace, whence the view
Of Alps on Alps, shining with all their snows,
O'er the dark forest of the tow'ring pines,
At once delights and elevates the soul.—

COUNTESS.

'Tis well remember'd ; and the western sun
Must, at this moment, pour a golden blaze
On their white summits, and their lofty rocks.
Dear count, your arm.—Marquis, you'll shew the *way*,
And lead Matilda to her favorite seat.

D. [Exeunt.]

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

SCENE II.

The great Hall, where enter BLAISE and TERESA.

TERESA.

You tell me wonders, I can hardly credit !

Can you believe the chambers you have mention'd
Are *really* haunted ?—

BLAISE.

'Tis a serious truth.—

Certain it *is*, that ere my present lord
Forbade access to those, and other rooms,
Certain it *is*, strange noises oft' were heard
At dead of night: deep groans, and creaking doors;
And hurrying steps, and hollow murmurings.—

TERESA.

O ! let me never pass within the view
Of those apartments !—I should die with fear
If I but heard the groans !—Hark !—What was that ?
That rustling sound, along the vaulted roof ?

BLAISE.

Nought but your fancy ; or the rushing wind
Against the gothic casements of the hall.

TERESA.

Are the apartments very far from hence ?

BLAISE.

Quite at th' other extremity of the castle :
The old count lov'd them for their privacy.

TERESA.

Thank Heav'n ! or I shou'd tremble at my shadow.

But

But now the troubled spirit is at rest?

No midnight noises now?

BLAISE.

Yes, still, by night,

At times I've heard the sound of passing feet

And creaking hinges;—But the groans have long,

Long ceas'd.

TERESA.

The spirit, then, has not appear'd?

BLAISE.

Never:—nor since my master kept the keys

Of those apartments, have the groans been heard;

For when the rumour once had reach'd his ear,

Of midnight noises and a walking ghost,

He gave strict charge that no domestic more,

Or passing guest, should sleep within that wing;

Then shut it up, and keeps it from all notice.—

TERESA.

Think you my lord believes the rooms are haunted?

BLAISE.

I know not *that*; but *vast* as is the mansion,

He never felt the want of those apartments,

And did not like report should circulate

The wond'rous story of his haunted castle;

To frighten *some*, to move the jest of *others*,

And draw a curious gaping crowd around,

To watch for spirits, and disturb his peace.

And who can blame him for the wise precaution?

TERESA.

What wou'd my noble lady give to see

Those haunted rooms!—I've often heard her talk

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

Of dreadful things, and supernatural beings !
 She thinks *such may* appear, but fears them not.
 I never knew a lady of such courage !—

BLAISE.

Without the keys she cannot enter them.—
 Nor has my master ever shewn them since.—
 Nothing wou'd more offend him than to mention
 So strange a tale.

TERESA.

Well, Blaife, another time
 You'll tell me more ; I now must seek my lady.—

*(As she passes by the table sees and takes up the
 keys, left by the Count.)*

What keys are these ?

BLAISE.

Three large ones, and a less !
 I know the larger lead to those apartments
 I told you of. The lesser one I know not :
 The count, in haste to go, has left them here.

TERESA.

I'm glad his caution has been *once* asleep ;
 I will convey them to my noble mistress,
 And tell her all the marvels they secure.—
 Adieu ! good Blaife.

BLAISE.

My dear Teresa stay !—
 Trust them to me !—It would displease my lord
 If any hint of what I've told were giv'n.
 The countess ought from *him* to hear the story,
 When he shall judge it proper to entrust her.

It

It is not fit for *us* to interfere
In such concerns as these!

TERESA.

Nay, nay, good friend,
If he has hitherto ne'er trusted *you*
To keep *these* keys, 'tis odds but he wou'd rather
My lady guarded them till his return.

BLAISE.

If not to *me*, entrust them to Lapont;
The count in *him* has perfect confidence.

TERESA.

Think you Lapont is trusted like my lady!
To *her* the doating count has still reveal'd
His inmost thoughts.—He loves her with such pas-
sion,
And finds his tenderness so well return'd,
That were his life and honor *both* at stake,
To *her*, with free and fearless confidence,
Wou'd *both* be trusted.—Rest *assur'd* of this.

BLAISE.

Enough: you ought to know their humours best.
But yet my heart misgives me that some trouble
Will surely spring from these forgotten keys.

TERESA.

Fear nothing! I will save you free from blame.

BLAISE.

I was to blame for tattling thus about them.

[Exit one way, and Blaize the other, who passes
Lapont burrying back.

Enter

Enter LAPONT in great Agitation.

LAPONT.

Where are these villanous keys? He left them *here*—
 He *surely did!*—accursed be my haste
 Not to secure them, ere I followed him!
 Perhaps old Blaise has found them.—If 'tis so,
 I'll watch and sound him well, but I will have 'em,
 Yet still, Lapont, *beware of anxious questions.*—
 Such wou'd betray an earnestness about them,
 Might lead to curious search, and *that to ruin.*
 But yet some prudent means *must* be contriv'd
 To get them back.—'Tis of the last importance
 To *me*, the *count*, and to our mutual safety!
 This haughty beauty, overaws my soul.
 I dare not face the ardors of her eye;
 It looks a scorn I cannot brook, nor bear.
 I dread her empire o'er her doating husband;
 And if I cannot *shake* it, soon will seize
 Some lucky moment to secure my fortune,
 Then leave this castle, and its hated owners.

[Exit.

Enter the MARQUIS, and MATILDA.

MARQUIS.

Repose yourself! these fervent western rays
 Have overpower'd you with oppressive heat.

MATILDA.

Thanks to your kindness! I am much reliev'd,
 And always most delighted to receive,

—For

—For prudish forms were idle with me now,—
Repeated proofs of your unvarying love.

“ MARQUIS.

“ Generous Matilda! Cou’d my passion *cool*,
“ This noble candor wou’d awake its warmth.

“ MATILDA.

“ Thus—with this pure, with this ingenuous ardor—
“ *Thus* let us ever act, and ever love!”—
But I am pleas’d the countess did not mark,
—Held in close converse by her noble guest,—
Our quick retreat.—“ I know she’s never weary
“ Exploring such rare scenes as nature here,
“ Exulting, offers the enchanted eye :
“ Sublime, as various; beautiful, as wild !”

“ MARQUIS.

She is a lovely, and a noble creature !
“ I never saw such spirit, and such softness,
“ So high a mind, with so much courtesy;
“ Such lofty manners, with such winning grace !”
I trust the count will merit the rare blessing
Which fortune has bestow’d, in such a wife.
How did he win her?—For she came upon us
Before you told me half I wish’d to know
Of such a woman, and your chosen friend ?

“ MATILDA.

In a few words; by ardent perseverance,
His various talents, and his manly grace.
Yet, charming as he is, methinks the countess
Eclipses him, with her superior lustre.

“ MARQUIS.

MARQUIS.

Her rank and fortune, too, as I have heard,
 Surpass'd his own.—But absent, long, from France,
 And late return'd to peace and joy and love,
 From all the dangers of the distant war,
 I know but little of events at home.

MATILDA.

Sole heiress of the house of duke Pontac,
 Her riches, birth, and wond'rous excellence,
 Made her a match for many a sov'reign prince.
 Such woo'd her; but magnanimous of soul,
 "Unsway'd by interest, or by vanity,"
 She wou'd not marry, whom she cou'd not love.

MARQUIS.

Her house is of the noblest France con boast,
 Which makes me wonder,—tho' the count himself
 Bears a fair name, and owns an ample fortune,—
 That her proud father wou'd consent her *hand*
 Shou'd honour any, but of princely blood!—

MATILDA.

You know not how he doats upon his daughter:
 When she assur'd him,—for her gen'rous soul,
 Knows no disguise,—that to Montval alone
 Her heart cou'd be presented with her hand,
 Tho' somewhat loth, he gave his flow consent,
 Sanction'd her passion, and approv'd her choice.
 And as *she* never knows a *lukewarm* feeling,
 Never was man more ardently belov'd.—

MARQUIS.

Fortunate count! O! may his soul catch fire
 At her bright flame, and emulate her virtue!

MATILDA.

MATILDA.

You seem to speak as somewhat doubtful of him !
Have you heard aught that might *impeach his worth* !

MARQUIS.

I trust he is reform'd ; but well remember
When closely link'd with the gay profligates
Which are at once, the scourge, and shame of Paris,
He plung'd, with *them*, in all the wild excess,
And all the follies of that splendid city.—

MATILDA.

I hope his riper years have seen the error.

MARQUIS.

I hope they *have* ; for graver manners mark'd
His public conduct, *ere* he knew the countess,
And better maxims seem'd to take the lead
Of senseless squand'ring, and destructive vice.

MATILDA.

I grieve to hear he *was* their votary ?
Ah ! never ! never ! may his noble bride
Know that his reputation suffer'd blemish
From vice, and follies, which her spotless heart
Wou'd mourn *cou'd* taint the object of its love.

MARQUIS.

Be not disquieted ! for once renounc'd,
Vice shews too hateful to allure us back,
And too repulsive, to seduce us more !—
But the day wanes.—The countess soon will *join us* ;
Then let us enter, and await her presence,—

[*Exeunt.*]

E

Enter

Enter Lapont, and Blaise.

LAPONT.

So honest Blaise, you think your master's choice,
—That lofty countess, with her lofty scorn—
Does honour to his wisdom, and his taste?

BLAISE.

Who *can* think otherwise, that sees her charms,
And knows my lady's virtue, wealth, and birth?

LAPONT.

Well, I confess all *this*: but then her spirit,
Her spirit Blaise, may try thy master's temper!
She looks as if enamour'd of disdain,
And shews a distance to his old dependents,
—Most *feelingly I speak!*—as if she scorn'd
To notice any, but of *noblest* blood,—
I wou'd not such a spirit in wife!

BLAISE.

To *me* she shews no symptom of disdain;
But is most gentle, kind, and condescending.

LAPONT.

That's mere caprice; for *thou* shalt feel, ere long,
Her haughty temper, and imperious scorn.
But now I think on't, hast thou found some *keys*
The count, forgetful, left upon his table?
He bade me seek them, as in friendly talk,
He held me to his coach.

BLAISE.

I have them not.

LAPONT.

LAPONT.

Nay ! nay ! this sounds so like equivocation !
 Know you who *has* ? or, did you see them here ?

BLAISE.

I need not tell you all I see and know.—

LAPONT.

Granted my friend. But yet methinks this answer,
 Night vex the count.—You know his hasty temper,
 And know his value for the keys in question,
 Which he has only trusted to *my care*.
 It matters not to *me*.

BLAISE.

To speak the truth,
 My lady's favou'rite woman found them here,
 And said she'd, straightway, give them to her *mistress*.

LAPONT (*agitated.*)

Give them the countess !—run and stop her Blaize !
 But—yet—no matter (*aside*) “ for she knows them not,
 “ Nor dreams of what importance ”—’tis no matter.—
 The keys are little worth ; altho’ the count,
 For reasons thou hast heard, of ghosts, and groans,
 And such ridiculous, and idle tales,
 Chuses to have them in his *own possession*.

BLAISE.

And so I told Teresa.

LAPONT (*agitated.*)

So you *told* her ?
 Can nothing ever stop thy busy tongue !
 How dare you *thus* reveal !—But never mind,
 What care’s thy master for the silly rumours.

Yet, *wou'd* thou had'st been *silent*!—Go and call
Young Ambrose hither.—I've a message for him
Sent from the count, which I had near forgotten.

[*Exit. Blaise.*

I must be quick! Destruction seize them all!

[*Takes pen, ink, and paper out
of his pocket, and writes.*

So—So—'tis well—this, sure *must* call him back
With eager haste—

(*Ambrose enters.*)

Come hither my good lad;
Clap on thy spurs: saddle the fleetest horse
Thy master owns, and gallop after him
With thy best speed.—It shall be well rewarded!
Waking or sleeping say thou com'st from me,
And give this letter to his hand alone.—

AMBROSE.

“ Your pleasure shall be done. I know the road,
“ And can o'ertake the Count ere one o'clock.

[*Exit Ambrose.*

LAPONT.

Ah! might he meet my wish, he *now* were *here*?
I'll strive to watch the countess, till he comes,
And counteract the misery I dread,—
Cou'd I invent some pretext might induce her
To *follow* her lov'd lord!—*Yes*,—that were *well*.
Curse on his tenderness!—had I been *by*,
Or had I once suspected her *proud nature*,
I wou'd have interfer'd to *spoil* their *marrage*.

But

But cou'd I meet Teresa ere *she* enters,
Much trouble and much terror might be spar'd.
Curse on those keys?—guarded with so much *care*,
Recover'd once, they ne'er shall scape me more;
Or if they *shou'd*, they shall not then betray me.---

[*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I—*The Great Hall.* Enter the COUNTESS
and the COUNT of Colmars.

COUNTESS.

Tempted by all the beauties of the scene,
Which caught new graces from the setting sun,
I thought not 'twas so late.

COUNT.

'Tis close of day.

COUNTESS.

So long shut up in all the smoke of Paris,
Loathing its noise, but more its hurrying life,
“ Where ev'ry moment's fill'd, yet little done,
“ By feeling hallow'd, or approv'd by reason ;”
These balmy breezes, whisp'ring health and peace,
And the soft calm that steals upon the soul,
Turning its thoughts to meditations high,
And converse sweet, made me forget the hour.
I hope the dews will not affect your health ?

COUNT.

By *choice*, accustom'd to a country life,
My nerves are strung to every change of season,
And brave, alike, the noon and midnight air.
You are too good to think of an old man
With so much kindness !

COUN-

COUNTESS.

Ven'erable yourself,
Were you not Albert's father's chosen friend :
And can my heart be cold to such a claim ?

COUNT.

Your approbation charms, and honours me.
But now 'tis time to thank your courtesy,
And take my leave.

COUNTESS.

What, at so late an hour !
We quarrel if to-night you quit the castle.

COUNT.

What shall I say ? Commanding every heart,
Mine bends before you, and obeys your pow'r.
But, with your leave, I must dispatch my servant,
T'inform my wife and daughter of my purpose,
Lest they expect and wait my *late* return.

COUNTESS.

At your good pleasure, sir.

[*Exit Count of Colmar.*
[*Countess calls out Ho ! call Terefa !*

Enter TERESA.

TERESA.

O ! my dear lady ! I have heard such things !

COUNTESS.

What things, Teresa ?—What new fable now
Excites thy wonder, and awakes thy fear ?

TERESA.

Look, madam, at these keys ! Blaise says they
open
The haunted rooms !

COUN-

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

COUNTESS.

You rave ! What haunted rooms ?

TERESA.

Where a wild spirit walks, and groans by night ;
And rattles chains and locks, and shakes the doors !

COUNTESS.

Dost thou not dream ? What idle tale is this ?
Give *me* the keys—How came they in your hands ?
And what unknown apartments do they open ?

TERESA.

The good old count's : he died in one of them.

COUNTESS.

And what of that ? Somewhere we all must die.
Is *this* a reason why the rooms are haunted ?

TERESA.

Indeed, my lady, it is *very true* !
These dreadful noises, and these groans *were* heard,
And ever since the rooms have been lock'd up,
And the count keeps the keys himself.

COUNTESS.

The count !

TERESA.

Yes, madam : nor has any person since,
Except himself, presum'd to enter them.

COUNTESS.

Then by what means have you procur'd the
keys ?

TERESA.

As I was talking, madam, in the hall,
With good old Blaise, I found them on the table :
He told me what they open'd : and the count,
By some strange chance, must have forgotten them,

In

In hurry to depart ; for till that hour
Kept with the greatest caution—

COUNTESS (*interrupting her*).

You may go.

Let not this foolish tale escape your lips,
Nor prostitute my Montval's honour'd name,
By bringing it in proof of such romance !
Desire my friends wou'd sup, nor wait *my coming*.

[*Exit Terefa.*

I'm lost in wonder !—What can all this mean ?
But I will know if I have seen these rooms :
Perhaps I *have*, unconscious of their fame.
No, no ! the castle's vast and intricate,
And if some myst'ry hangs o'er these apartments,
The count had mention'd it while shewing them.
Ha ! I remember now, before we parted,
He anxious seem'd that I should wait his presence,
To wind th' entire lab'rinth of his castle !—
I hate concealments !—They alarm and wound me,
From *him*, to whom, without *disguise*, my heart
Is always open, and shou'd know, alike,
The secret thoughts and foldings of his own !
Before the night is past, I'll see these chambers !
Thinking no ill, I fear none.—Innocence
Is the best buckler, and the surest guard
'Midst every danger, and for every fear.

(*As she is going out, meets Lapont.*)

A word, Lapont !—Say, did you see my lord
After he left me to proceed to Paris ?

F

LAPONT.

LAPONT.

Yes, madam.

COUNTESS.

Did he send me any message?

LAPONT.

None, lady, but his love and deep regret
To be, so soon, divided from your arms.
But though he sent no message, he express'd
An earnest wish that you wou'd follow him,
As long this business might demand his absence.

COUNTESS.

Long might demand! --- He said not so to me!

LAPONT.

Madam, if I may counsel—

COUNTESS (*haughtily interrupting him*).

You may counsel!

Pray know yourself, Lapont! --- I always make
My equals, or my heart, my counsellors,
In the nice points of duty, or of love.
My noble guests may offer their advice;
But you presume in giving, till I ask it.

[Exit.

LAPONT.

School'd and contemn'd! confusion on her pride! ---
Yet, high as she may think herself above me,
And far beyond my puny pow'r to touch her,
I yet may reach, and daunt her tow'ring soul!
I wou'd almost risk my life to humble her! ---
Too well, before, I mark'd her scornful eye;
It seem'd to penetrate my inmost soul! ---
But tho' her pride has cut me to the quick,

I joy

I joy to think she harbours no suspicion
About the keys, and their important trust,
All, then, is yet secure ! -- Cou'd I but meet
Her fav'rite woman, whose unguarded tongue
Tells all its knows, and whose unbounded fears
Dread ev'ry passing sound, much might be done !
But, to my wish, she comes !

Enter TERESA, *hastily*.

Why, thus, in haste ?

TERESA.

My terrors brought me here ?

LAPONT.

What causes them ?

Why fits pale fear upon thy lovely brow,
Like clouds that intercept the chearful day,
Obscuring all its charms ?

TERESA.

You flatter, sir ;

But I have cause, and cause enough for fear !

LAPONT.

What cause, my fair one ? Whisper it to me !
You know not, yet, your influence o'er my heart,
Which cannot take content, while you are sad.

TERESA.

O ! you have, doubtless, heard the horrid tale,
Of midnight noises, and the haunted rooms ?

LAPONT.

What ! has imprudent Blaise betray'd the secret
---For only he and I are privy to it---
The count has guarded with such jealous care ?

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

That garrulous old fool must still be talking,
And only death can stop his busy tongue !
No doubt he told you ev'ry circumstance !

TERESA.

He did ! he did ! And I shall die with fear,
If forc'd to wind the long dark galleries,
Without one friend to hear or comfort me !

LAPONT.

I'll be *that* friend, if you will take my counsel.
Beware you mention not this marv'lous story
Among the servants ! 'Twou'd offend the count,
And lose his favour !—But, *still more* beware
Not to be prying for the troubled spirit !—
Once *I* but tried to open the apartment,
Daringly curious ! where it *nightly* walks,
Groaning, and clanking chains, and spouting fire,—
When suddenly my *hand* received a shock,
And then my *heart*, which long as life remains
I shall remember ! Heav'n forbid the hand
Which took some keys were left upon this table
Shou'd open with them the mysterious chambers !

TERESA.

Unhappy wretch ! O ! heav'n have mercy on me !
Why did I take those unknown fatal keys,
And then deliver them to my dear lady ?

LAPONT (*aghast*).

What ! has the countess got the fatal keys ?

TERESA.

She *has* ! She *has* !—'Twas *I* who gave them her !

LAPONT (*eagerly*).

And did you talk to *her* about the ghost ?

TERESA.

TERESA.

O !—yes ! Alas ! I told her every thing !

LAPONT *(hastily).*

What did she say ?

TERESA.

She treated it with scorn ;

And if we can't persuade her from her purpose,
Her dauntless soul, which mocks my prudent fears,
Will surely tempt her to her own destruction !

LAPONT.

Prevail with her to wait the count's return :
She knows his fondness can deny her nothing ;
And if she loves him, she will shun his anger
By circulating, once again, the tale
His better judgment took such pains to silence :
But shou'd your warning voice be disregarded,
Think you she'll dare to enter those apartments
Even by night ?

TERESA.

No, surely, *not by night*,
But in the morning she'll not fail to view them.
Pray you, good sir, attend me to the room
Where sit the ladies' women !

LAPONT.

I will guard you.
Make me your confident, whatever befalls,
And it may save you from *some dire misfortune* !

[Goes out with her, but soon returns.

This proud and daring woman shakes my soul !
She curbs my power, and baffles all my art.
What can be done ? I dread her deep discernment !

If

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

If she explores the chambers, I am lost !
 Yet, she may *search*, and *search*, and not *discover* !—
There lies some *comfort* ! Let her pause to-night,
 And I'll defy her prying spirit after.
 To-morrow's early dawn will bring the count,
 And then I earnestly will urge a measure
 Shall bid good-night, for ever, to our fears.
 If he *deny me*, he must stand the trial,
 But stand alone ; for I'll abandon him
 To all the shame and peril of his fate.

[Exit.]

SCENE—*Changes to the Saloon:*

Where appear the Count of COLMAR, the MARQUIS, and
 MATILDA.

MATILDA.

I fear the countess has fatigued herself,
 Did you not mark her heavy alter'd eye?

COUNT.

I did : but more there seem'd to me of thought,
 Of careful thought, in her expressive face,
 Than weariness.—

MARQUIS.

I own, I think with *you* :

A something surely presses on her mind,
 To cause this sudden change.—When she return'd
 Was she thus absent, and absorbed in thought?

COUNT.

Quite the reverse ! Her walk had giv'n her spirits :
 Enchanted with the glories of the scene,
 Her pure and animated heart expanded
 At feeling, once again, the country's freedom,
 And all the charms of renovated nature.

MARQUIS:

MARQUIS.

The dullness, and the lour of little minds,
 Like the thin clouds that fleet before the breeze,
 Affect me not : but when superior souls
 Turn inwards on themselves, with such deep musing,
 The cause is weighty, and I dread th' event.

COUNT.

Take it not thus ! We all have serious hours,
 Which oft' depend on thoughts we can't command,
 Born of those exquisite nerves, whose finer tones
 Discordant thrill, we know not how or why.

MATILDA.

Yet mov'd without a cause, I never knew her,
 Free as she is from vapours or caprice,
 And of a temper even, firm, and cheerful.
 Profoundly touch'd she very rarely is ;
 And never, but to some important purpose.

MARQUIS.

My dear Matilda, do not be alarm'd !
 I trust your love, and not your judgment, construes
 A serious manner into serious care.
 "Remember too, that her dear lord is absent ;
 "For the first time, divided from her arms !
 "This, to a heart so finely strung as her's,
 "Is cause enough to give her pensive moments."

MATILDA.

Alas ! I fear, there is some other cause ;
 Tho' whence it cou'd arise I cannot guess.

MARQUIS.

And is there need of other for her sadness ?
 From the warm temper of your tender heart,
 Which, form'd for purest love, but light esteems

Its

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

Its own peculiar joys—with pride I speak—
When parted from the object of its choice ;
From your own heart, judge truly of your friend.

MATILDA.

“ Your kind and generous nature, well I know,
“ Would guard my timid soul from ev’ry care.
“ But yet, remember, your own fears erewhile !

MARQUIS.

“ Those fears were premature.—Be satisfied !
“ Nothing but Montval’s absence, rest assur’d,
“ Has clouded over the fair countess’ brow.”

MATILDA.

Pray heav’n it be so !—But the count can tell us,
From his long intimacy in the castle,
What is the character of this Lapont.
The countess likes him not.—

COUNT.

She shews her judgment.

His soul a compound is of art and vice :—
Before his death, my friend discarded him
For poisoning the morals of his son,
By his base counsels.—Vile ingratitude !
For all the honors, and the favors done him !
And, I confess, it touches me with wonder,
And, I may add, with grief, to see the son,
Th’ accomplish’d son of such a matchless father
Care’s a villain who disgraces him !

MATILDA.

No wonder that my friend, so pure herself,
Should feel repulsion at the wretch’s presence.
O ! if the count respects her as he ought,
He will abandon.—But the countess comes.—

A TRAGEDY.

41

Enter the Countess.

You'll pardon me, my friends, this little absence.
To-morrow shall atone for my omissions.
With you I shall be under no restraint.
How wears the night?

COUNT.

After our walk, we all must wish to rest ;
And sweet the sleep that waits on exercise !
May it be your's, my friends, and so good-night !
Bring in the lights !

[Servants attend with lights.]

Attend my noble guests
Unto their several chambers!—Nay! no form!

MARQUIS. **MATILDA.** **COUNT.**
Fair be your dreams!—Adieu!—Lady, good night!

COUNTESS.

That's as it may be !—As the spectre wills,
Which haunts my fancy in a thousand shapes,
And will not quit my troubled soul one instant !—
“ If I knew what to fear, it less wou'd move me :
Yet rather apprehension 'tis, than terror ;
A solemn feeling, than a weak dismay,—
Were not the name of him I love, involv'd
In this mishapen tale, I should despise it !—
This makes me silent to my noble guests.
Yet ! !—And I *bless* the thought !—This goblin story
May have induc'd the Count,—and wisely too—

To lock up the apartments ; lest his peace,
 And pride, should suffer blemish from the rumour,
 Spread widely round, and turn'd, and magnified,
 As ignorance, and superstition prompted !—
 This shall allay the tumult in my breast,
 And flatter downy slumber to my pillow !—
 To-morrow then !—What ho ! Terese there !
 Call up Terese !—'Twas a blessed thought !—
 I wou'd have done, just as my lord has done !

Enter TERESA, trembling.

COUNTESS.

Why dost thou tremble ? Is it at thy shadow ?—

TERESA.

O ! be not angry !—If you did but know !—

COUNTESS. (angrily.)

What !

TERESA.

What Lapont has told : what dreadful things !

COUNTESS.

Lapont !!!

TERESA.

O ! he has often heard the ghost,
 And swears that trying to unlock the door,
 It gave him such a shock !—

COUNTESS. (sighing.)

I too am shock'd !

TERESA.

Ah ! for the love of Heaven restore the keys,
 Or the fierce spirit will endanger you !
 And so Lapont believes.

COUNTESS. (interrupting her.)

Only Lapont !—

Can thy hoarse voice found nothing but Lapont !—

Go !—

Go!—Go to bed!—Thou and my other women,
I shall not need your services to-night.—
But not a word to them about the spectre!
On my displeasure, silence to them, and all!—
Yet, as you go, bid honest Blaise come hither!—

[Exit TERESA.

My soul's on fire!—I will be satisfied,
Betide what may!—Lapont is in the Plot!—
I've heard there are antipathies in nature,
And he is mine!—Why should my lord care for him?
And yet he does—Cares for, with confidence.
Nay, makes a favourite of the dangerous villain.
But why a villain?—'Tis his face alone,
The damning characters imprinted there,
That make me call him so!—I hope, unjustly!—

[Enter BLAISE.

Lady, your servant humbly waits your orders!

COUNTESS.

Blaise! if your face belies you not, you're honest?
Honest, I hope, and firm: say, shall I trust you?

BLAISE.

Lady, my hand, heart, life, are at your bidding!

COUNTESS.

I'll never tempt thee to a dangerous service,
Nor to a deed that shall dishonour thee!
Thou can't be secret too?

BLAISE.

Else were I base,
And little merited this condescension.

COUNTESS.

Be silent, or you forfeit my esteem!

You know the rooms which idle rumour says
Are haunted by a ghost?—What is their number?

BLAISE.

An anti-room, a bed chamber, and closet.

COUNTESS.

Direct me to them!—

BLAISE. (*astonished*)

Madam!—

COUNTESS.

No reply!

I laugh at spectres, and am bent to clear
These useful chambers, of their ill report.

BLAISE. (*terrified*)

Lady! indeed, my duty makes me speak.—

COUNTESS.

I've heard it all, and know 'tis some imposture.
Be thou my guide! for I will pass this night,
Within the chamber where the spirit walks!

BLAISE.

Now, Heav'n forbid!—

COUNTESS.

No more of foolish fears!

Ev'ry attempt were vain to shake my purpose:
A cheerful book and lights are all I need
To comfort, or defend me:—Thou shalt watch
In th' anti-chamber by:—Now to my closet,
And thence attend me to the haunted rooms.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

The Antichamber to the Saloon.

Enter LAPONT and TERESA.

TERESA.

ALAS! I fear she's gone to that apartment!

LAPONT.

I wonder at such rashness!—Are you sure
Your noble Lady is not in her chamber?

TERESA.

Wou'd that she were! She bade me call up Blaise,
And from that moment neither have been seen.

LAPONT.

It must be so!—Each circumstance confirms it:
She sent for him to shew the haunted rooms,
But little knows the dangers she may run,
By braving the inexorable spirit!
I know, by proof, its fierce vindictive nature.

TERESA.

O Heaven! Dear, kind Lapont, do not desert us!
How shall we save the too presumptuous Countess?
She may be lost if you cannot assist her.

LAPONT.

Be calm! To save her life I'll risk my own.

I yet .

I yet, perhaps, may be in time to warn her.
 From a bold enterprise may prove her ruin;
 Caution and prudence, will do more than courage,
 Where we encounter ~~supernatural~~ things.—
 Let the profoundest silence seal your lips!—

TERESA.

O ! doubt me not ! In all you shall direct.
 But, pray ! inform me of the Countess' safety :
 My fears will almost kill me till you come.

LAPONT.

Go to your chamber, where remain in peace
 'Till I shall seek you. Save your Lady's credit,
 And doing so, the honor of this house,
 By keeping all a secret from her guests.—
 This is of more importance than you think.
 Trust all to me:—you shall know more hereafter;
 For my fond heart beats warmly in your favor.—
 I'll see you safe, and then will seek the Countess,
 Trust to my friendly counsel, and fear nothing.

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.

Changes to a spacious Chamber, with a stately Bed, in an Alcove. The Hangings of the Walls Tapestry;—a Couch, with a Table before it, on which is a Book and Lights. The COUNTESS appears, speaking to BLAISE, who is pale, and trembling.

COUNTESS.

'Tis well !—Nay,—why this tremor? Is there aught To move thy fear?—

BLAISE.

BLAISE. And I, and all the world
But, Lady! who can tell
How soon the ghost!—'Tis after twelve o'clock!

COUNTESS.

Poor Blaife!—I see how terror and obedience
Wage war within thy heart:—be not dismay'd!
I doubt I may have chos'n a stouter guard;
However, Blaife, thy valor shall not stand
A trial too severe. If I cry help,
Which will not be; assure thyself it will not—
Alarm the house; else watch without, in silence.

BLAISE. (as he goes out)
Thank Heav'n I am dismiss'd!—Wou'd morn
were come! [Exit BLAISE.

COUNTESS.

And now to scrutinize this marvellous chamber.
It is a noble one; and might be turn'd
To better purpose, than to harbour ghosts!—
The tapestry is rich, and little worn:
The bed is sumptuous;—every thing complete,
And all in order:—
I can find nothing, yet, to cause alarm;
And, doubtless, all has sprung from superstition,
The child of ignorance, and slavish fear!
But why this smaller key suspended hence?
The slightest trace of any other door
Cannot be found: except the dressing-room;—
That's open; and this key fits not the lock.—
But what it leads to, is not worth conjecture.—
I'll to my book; and sleeping, for this night,
Upon that couch, perhaps may dream of ghosts,

Which,

Which, waking, I have neither heard, or seen.

[*Takes up the book, but presently reclines
on the couch, and begins to doze.*]

SCENE III.

Changes to the Anti-Chamber, where BLAISE is seen gently opening the Door a little which leads to the inner Apartment.

BLAISE.

Thank Heav'n! all's quiet, and my lady sleeps!
I trust the horrid spectre is at peace,
And ne'er will come to trouble us again!
O! that a woman should possess such courage!

LAPONT.

[*Gently opens the outward door, saying softly*]

Hist! hist! Blaise! hist!

BLAISE.

Mercy! what noise was that!

LAPONT.

It is a friend! Lapont! be not afraid!
I come to guard, and not to injure thee!—

BLAISE.

Now, Heav'n be prais'd! I fear'd it was the ghost!
Enter, good Sir! O! welcome, kind Lapont!
I am exceeding glad to see you here!

LAPONT.

I know thou art. But where's thy noble lady?

BLAISE.

Hush! hush!—She's fast asleep in yonder chamber.

LAPONT.

LAPONT. (*Pleased and eagerly*)

Asleep d'ye say!—Are you quite sure she sleeps?

BLAISE.

Come gently this way, and yourself may see her.
Look thro' the door.

LAPONT,

Thank Heav'n! she is asleep!

Sound be her slumbers!—Then we, still are safe!
How long is't since she enter'd these apartments?

BLAISE.

Scarcely, I think, an hour has past away
Ere I set all in order, and came hither,

LAPONT.

Did she discover no surprise, or terror,
On looking round the gloomy haunted room?

BLAISE.

No! not the least.

LAPONT.

Nor have you heard her since,
Exclaiming loud? nor have the sound of locks,
Or hollow groans, or creaking hinges scar'd you?

BLAISE.

Nothing! O! Heaven! I tremble at the thought!

LAPONT.

Why art thou here? Was it by her command
Thou thus art plac'd her patient sentinel?

BLAISE.

It was: and strictly that command enjoin'd
That I shou'd watch, in silence, till I heard
Her voice demanding help.

LAPONT.

I'm satisfied.

H

BLAISE.

BLAISE.

But who, Lapont, inform'd you I was here?

LAPONT.

Teresa stealing to her lady's chamber
 And finding she was absent, in a fright
 Ran straight to me: I quickly guess'd the plot,
 And came to warn, or help, as things requir'd.
 But since she is asleep, I trust the ghost
 Will not appear to harm, or trouble her.—
 'Tis past the time when it is wont to walk.

BLAISE.

But if it shou'd!!

LAPONT.

Be you upon the watch,
 And see, from time, to time, the Countess sleeps!
 Her safety may depend upon this caution.—
 If any noise is heard; as groans, or talking,
 Or creaking doors, or sound of opening locks,
 Run, quick, to me,—I'll watch in my own room—
 And give alarm!—Be wakeful on thy life!—

[Exit.

BLAISE. (As he goes out.)

O! trust me, good Lapont! I will not fail.

[Shuts the door cautiously, of the inner
 Chamber, then takes a cordial bottle
 from his pocket and drinks.]

My mind is more at ease: This shall support me.
 'Tis half past one, and my old eyes are heavy:
 There is no danger from the ghost to night!
 So I may safely venture, like my lady,
 To court the comfort of refreshing sleep.—

[Pushes an arm chair behind the side scene
 to repose in, and Exit.]

SCENE

SCENE IV.

Changes to the Inner Chamber, where, while the Countess still dozes; a long and deep Groan is heard, she starts, and half rising, exclaims.

COUNTESS.

Did I not hear some noise?—Or was't the wind?

[*Another deep groan; on which she starts up, greatly agitated.*]

What dismal sound was that?—Whence cou'd it come!

[*Repeated groans.*]

Again!—again!—It came from that alcove!

Be not appall'd, my soul!—Thou'st done no wrong!

[*As she advances, with great emotion towards the alcove, another groan is more distinctly heard.*]

Almighty God! if 'tis some troubled spirit, permitted, by thy will, to walk by night; Give me the grace to send it to the grave, Whate'er his cause of misery, in peace!

[*More groans; she starts aghast.*]

O!—speak!—appear!—reveal the secret trouble That forceth thee to leave the silent tomb, And roam 'midst darkness, and the midnight airs!

[*Groans repeated.*]

Now Heav'n sustain me, and enlighten me, To fathom this dread secret!—Hence! e'en hence The moaning issued, as if under ground!

[*She looks with wild horror round the alcove.*]

Yet, more distinct, as from some hollow cavern !
 Hah !—From the tapestry !—My soul's wound up
 To utmost agony of dread suspense,
 And I shall madden if—

[*Lifts up a loose part of the tapestry, and discovers a door.*]

What's here !—A door !
 A secret door ! And this the fateful key
 [*Hastily snatching the keys; unlocking the door.*]

That leads to what, at once, I wish, and fear !—
 [Groans very distinct.]

Nay, then, there is no pause !—Narrow, and dark,
 And steep, as is the way, and chill the air,
 Something impels me on, and I must go !
 Be God my great protector, and my guide !—

[*She disappears, but soon rushes back with looks of amazement and horror.*]

Eternal pow'rs !—I saw it thro' the gloom !
 Tho' indistinct !—I heard its hollow groans !—
 They pierc'd my heart, and curdled up my blood !—
 Base fears ! Why have ye thus subdued my soul !
 If it shou'd follow, I will speak to it.—
 Hark !—It approaches !—O ! ye pow'rs above !
 Equal my courage to the dread occasion !—

[*The tapestry is lifted up slowly, and discovers the pale, and haggard, yet reverend figure of an Old Man, with a long white beard, and disordered hair, and dressed in a long flowing black robe, who speaks, as he enters.*]

OLD MAN.

This way it beckon'd me, and I will follow.

[*Seeing the Countess, he is awe-struck, and exclaims.*]

What heavenly vision's this!—Angel of light!
Say! Art thou come,—so long, so often call'd!—
To end my misery, and bear my spirit,
Where it, at last, may rest?—

COUNTESS. (*Approaching*)

Art thou the ghost?

OLD MAN.

I am, indeed, the shadow of myself,
My former self!—But what art thou, bright vision?

COUNTESS.

A weak, and erring creature, like thyself.—

OLD MAN.

If not an angel, as I fondly hop'd!
Come to release me from my secret dungeon;
Where lingering years of agonizing grief,
And racking pain, without one ray of comfort,
Have bow'd me down in hopeless misery!—
Why art thou here? And wherefore didst thou come
To shoot one cheering glance athwart my gloom,
Then quick withdraw the beam?—

COUNTESS.

Years, didst thou say?

Years hast thou languish'd in that dreary place,
The very glimpse of which appall'd my soul?

OLD MAN.

Alas! 'tis very long, or so it seems,
To one who only knows to count the hours
By the chill damps that drop upon his head,

Or

Or by his sighs, and tears!—'Tis very long!
 Since I was torn from the dear light of day,
 Rest of all comfort, and cut off from man!

COUNTESS.

I'm almost breathless with astonishment, and pity,
 And scarce can ask if Montval!—if my husband!—
 If by his rigour, thou so long hast suffer'd?

OLD MAN. (*aside*)

“ O! 'tis his wife! Resign'd,—so near my end,
 “ I won't accuse him!—They may live in peace!”

COUNTESS.

Why dost thou turn, and mutter to thyself?
 Speak out thy griefs, and tell me for what crime—

OLD MAN (*interrupting her*)

Be Heav'n my judge that none have brought me
 here!

COUNTESS.

Then who?—what tyrant, rough and pitiless!
 Immur'd thee thus, to die a living death?

OLD MAN.

Know you Lapont?—That villain was the cause!

COUNTESS (*exultingly*).

I said he was a villain!—O! a load,
 A heavy load is taken from my heart!—
 Whate'er thy guilt, I wou'd not that Montval,
 My dear Montval! had been so base of soul,
 To take such vengeance on thy helpless age,
 For worlds, on worlds!—But, he must know thy
 fate!—

OLD MAN.

Plac'd on the brink of dread eternity,
 I dare not lie!—He does;—but is misled
 By the vile miscreant whom you justly hate.

COUNTESS

COUNTESS.

Misled!—O bitter!—Can he see thy dungeon,
And look upon thy anguish, and thy age,
And not relent!—It cuts me to the soul!—
But tell me what, and whence, and who thou art?

OLD MAN.

Ask not what never shall escape my lips,
For potent reasons:—nought can wrest it from me!

COUNTESS.

“ Amazing!—But thou shalt no longer suffer!
“ I will release thee, of my own free will;
“ And thou shalt live, and be restor'd to comfort!
“ Thy miseries well may expiate thy guilt!—
“ And for Lapont! if he has injur'd thee,
“ That hateful villain! he shall have his meed!
“ Be sure he shall!”—

OLD MAN.

Dim is my spark of life!
Yet, to the last, we cherish liberty!
But all revenge is dead within my heart,
And ill I shou'd repay your generous pity,
By sowing discord 'twixt your lord and you.

COUNTESS.

O! soul of nobleness and charity!
Rever'd old man! Tax me to th' very utmost!
And I can much!—Tax all my pow'r and fortune!
For guilt ne'er harbour'd in a heart like thine.

OLD MAN.

Thou noble creature!—I am too weak to bear
This rush of gratitude, so long weigh'd down
By wrong, and cruelty, and pain, and sorrow!

COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

Be not dejected!—Hide not, thus, your face!

OLD MAN.

A thousand tender, painful recollections
Press down, and almost suffocate my heart!

COUNTESS.

What can this mean!—What dreadful mystery!

OLD MAN.

O! may it still a mystery be to you!—

COUNTESS.

'Tis wonderful! But go with me from hence!
"I hate to be so near that horrid dungeon!"

OLD MAN.

I will, on this condition.—That your lord
Shall never see me more. That you ne'er ask
Of him, or others, who, or what I am;
And that I part unseen by all but you!

COUNTESS.

Astonishing!—But only go with me,
And have thy wish.—My lord is gone to Paris,
Why then delay?

OLD MAN.

Allow me yet some pause!
What is the hour? For, buried from the light,
Darkness and day have been alike to me!

COUNTESS.

'Tis scarce above two hours from now to morn.

OLD MAN.

How learn'd you I was here? Or how depart,
At such an undue hour, without alarm?

COUNTESS.

How I discover'd you, at full, hereafter,

You

You shall be told:—to leave this night the Castle,
Without suspicion, were not possible.
But if resolv'd to go without delay,
To-morrow's dawn shall find the ready means
To send you hence, unknown to all but me.

OLD MAN.

“ Have you the keys ?

COUNTESS.

“ I have.

OLD MAN.

“ But how procur'd ?

COUNTESS.

“ By a mere chance, it were too long to tell.

[Recollects BLAISE, and looks into the anti-room.]

“ Hah ! I had forgot !—'Tis well, he's fast asleep.

OLD MAN. (alarmed)

“ Who's in that chamber ? ”

COUNTESS.

“ Only Blaise, the steward ; ”

“ Set there by me, to watch, and give alarm,

“ If aught requir'd. — ”

OLD MAN.

“ But has he overheard us ? ”

COUNTESS.

“ O'erspent with watching, he profoundly sleeps.

OLD MAN.

Then, by my sufferings, and my innocence ! ”

By that benevolence, which born of heaven,
Lives in your gen'rous heart, and from your eye

Beams melting pity on a stranger's woe,
 Back to my dungeon let me go, once more,
 And pass the interval from now, till morn!—
 O! grant me this request!—

COUNTESS.

Not for the world!

My pow'r, if needful, shall protect you here
 From every wrong.

OLD MAN.

Dear lady! be advis'd!

Lapont must miss the keys, and will be waking;
 For guilt, like his, is ever on the watch:
 Too well I know my cruel, crafty goaler!
 " And now, when all your bidding might com-
 mand,
 " Are, thro' the castle, sunk in deep repose,
 " It were not safe to trust a villain's vengeance.
 " So great his malice, and so black his crimes,
 " That even your rank, and pow'r might fail to
 save you:
 " I wou'd not, for the world, he saw us here!
 " 'Twou'd, surely urge him to some desperate
 deed!
 " Nor shall my name, or person be reveal'd
 " To your domestics: This my firm resolve,
 " The hope of liberty shall never alter!"

COUNTESS (*Aside.*)

" Blaise must know nothing. It were better thus:
 I'm loth to leave you in that dismal place.

OLD MAN.

The brightness of your angel countenance,
 Still present to my soul, shall give me light,

And

And spread effulgence thro' surrounding gloom !
At morn I will attend you.

COUNTESS.

“ Be it so, ion lool nayw I

“ Since so you will. But I shall count the hours,

“ Till sweet deliverance greets you by my hand.

[*Aside.*] “ Myself will watch and guard him till the
dawn.”

OLD MAN.

“ Think you a few short hours which surely lead

“ To light, and liberty, and long-lost friends,

“ Think you they can seem long, to me seem long,

“ Who years on years have languished in a dungeon?

COUNTESS.

“ At least these conserves, and this added light,”

May help to cheer you, till we meet again !

I will myself, conduct you to your prison.

Nay, no reply. I will not be refus'd.

[*Exeunt, she supporting him.*]

SCENE V.

*Changes to LAPONT'S Room where he appears walking
about, much agitated.*

LAPONT.

I cannot rest ! guilt, terror, and revenge,
With mingled violence, wake a hell within me !

If I shou'd fall, I will not fall alone.

The Countess, and her virtues I abhor !

I 2

Her

Her very beauty, to my eye, is hateful !
It fascinates, and overawes the Count,
And blasts my fortune, when the fruit grew ripe.
I was a fool not to make all things sure
Before this haughty meddling woman came !
Oh ! she shall learn how dangerous 'tis to goad
A resolute heart, that glories in it's guilt,
When independence, pow'r, or pleasure tempt !
That prating Blaise !—I must be rid of him.
Teresa I can fool to all I wish.
But while my bosom broods its embryo purpose,
Silent and dark. The Count will hurry back !
That must be thought of. I am safe to-night,
And for to-morrow's safety, and to-morrow's,
Long as the term of my strong life shall last,
My courage, and my cunning shall provide.

Enter BLAISE *hastily, pale, and trembling.*

BLAISE.

Lapont ! Lapont ! the Countess !

LAPONT *(Agitated)*

What of her ?

BLAISE.

Is murder'd by the ghost, or borne away !

LAPONT.

You rave, or dream ! How borne away ! how
murder'd !

BLAISE.

Alas ! I know not ! But she is not there !

LAPONT

LAPONT (*Eagerly*) Not where? Not where? Not in the chamber where you left her. How cou'd she go without your hearing her?

BLAISE. Heavy with watching, sleep, at last surpris'd me.

LAPONT (*Furiously*) Thou hoary wretch. [*Afside.*] "But I must curb my rage."

" She has found the secret door, and I am lost !

" Hah ! That's the only way !

BLAISE.

What can be done ?

LAPONT (*Afside*)

" There is no time for hesitation now,

" Forc'd to a point, peril on either side,

" One way, and only one can lead to safety."

Come this way Blaise, into my closet here !

I have something there to say of great importance.

[BLAISE enters with him, but is presently heard crying out.]

O ! do not murder me ! for mercy's sake !

LAPONT (*Behind the Scene*)

Dotard ! take that ! Go, sleep, for ever now !

[He then enters with bloody hands, and a dagger.]

So ! one is safe. That fool can blab no more !

This

This key will make me master of his hoard :—
A comfortable sum, in time of need ! *and a gold*
Happen what may, I shall not fear Montval,
And may enjoy my bloody spoils in peace, *it is not*
Without the dread of his pursuing vengeance.
Nay, such is my ascendance o'er his mind,—
That all I execute, he shall approve,
And largely pay me for my secrecy. *it is not*
'Tis almost dawn. I will but cleanse my hands,
And ease that miser's coffer of its gold,
And then my dagger flies at nobler prey.

[Exit.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Gallery.

Enter MATILDA and MARIA, in great consternation.

MATILDA.

NOT in her chamber? nor has been to night? What wonders have I heard? Am I awake? Can it be true, the story thou hast told, Of haunted rooms, and of a nightly spectre?

MARIA.

'Tis but too true. And having told the tale To my dear lady, who has got the keys, I thought it right to rouse you from your rest, And mention all I knew.

MATILDA.

Thou hast done well To break my sleep, where she may be in danger. Yet what the danger, Heav'n alone can tell, From such a strange, and sense-confounding cause! Wou'd thou hadst been discreet, and held thy tongue, About these wonders, till the Count's return.

MARIA.

MARIA.

Ah ! wou'd I had been silent ! But my fears
Betray'd my prudence ; thoughtless of th' event.

MATILDA.

Where lie the chambers which 'tis said are haunted ?

MARIA.

Alas ! I know not ! Blaise, if he were here,
Cou'd shew the way ; and so cou'd good Lapont,
Who, urg'd alike by courage and by zeal,
Hurried to seek, and to protect the Countess.

MATILDA.

A dreadful apprehension seizes me !
I like not such protectors ! Dearest friend !
The fearless temper of thy gen'rous mind
May urge thee on to unsuspected peril !
My heart is on the rack till thou art found.
Thou cou'dst not bear Lapont ! And thy sure eye
Has never fail'd to read a villain's heart.
What can be done ? Knock at the Marquis' door ?
Call up the Count ?—The Count ?—Ha ! he can
guide, Can surely guide us to those horrid chambers.
That way he sleeps. Be quick, and give alarm !

[Exit MARIA.

Why wou'd the Countess run this needless hazard ?

Now shoo. And now T

[Exit.

[LAPONT enters cautiously from the other side.]

Now is the time, when all are wrapt in sleep !
All but my victims, who shall feel my arm !
Since every project to prevent this woman,

This

A TRAGEDY.

This haughty woman, from her fatal prying,
Has been the means, by some accursed chance !
Of urging her to fathom the dread secret.
But she as well might have essay'd to crush
The deadly serpent with her delicate hands,
As to destroy, or counteract my vengeance !
Now her proud spirit—

*[Count of MONTWAL enters from the other
side of the stage, with an air of distress
and dismay.]*

“ He return'd so soon !
“ Too early, yet too late !”

COUNT.

What now Lapont ?

Is aught discover'd ? Hell itself is here !

[Striking his bosom.]

And thou the demon that has made it so !—
O ! had I never listen'd to thy counsel !

LAPONT.

’Twere waste of time or I cou'd answer you.
Keep your own secret, and you've nought to fear !

COUNT.

Yes ! Conscience ! Conscience ! waking, but too
late !

I loath myself, my crime, and its success !
Nor time, nor circumstance can ever cure
The living ulcer, that corrodes my heart !
Forc'd to adore, by that unerring justice,
Which all our arts can neither bribe nor blind,—
The radiant virtue which my *deeds* pollute,

Count

K

My

My soul can never taste of comfort more!
O! never! never!—

LAPONT.

Wretched canting this!
Worthy the bigot monk, and cloister'd cell,
Where solitude and fasting ape the tone
Of coward penitence, and pious zeal!

COUNT.

In vain! you mock the horrors I endure!
They merit sympathy, and not derision,
And most from thee, the partner of my guilt.
How can I face the Countess!—how support
Her pure embraces!

LAPONT (*neeringly*).

Trial too severe!—

But, if you value her esteem, or love,
For shou'd she know you, both were lost for ever,
Quickly depart!—Away! with speed, for Paris,
And never let her know of your return.

[*Aside.*]

“ His conscientious qualms must not be trusted.”

COUNT.

But are you certain she has no suspicion?

LAPONT.

Back! back! where welcome tidings shall await
you.
I'll soon be master of the fatal keys.
The Countess tried, and laugh'd at all they shew'd
her:
The secret door, to her's a secret still.
Away! away! or we may be discover'd!

Teresa

Teresa has the keys, and they'll be mine. *NoM ! O*

[Aside, going out.] *to Michel solo bna*
" Poor easy dupe ! he credits all I say ! " *Credit meekly*

COUNT. *in wod]*

Determin'd villain ! had I never known thee,
I had been blest ! But I must still dissemble,
Till the time's riper to defy his malice.
I'll go and order that my horse be ready, *ai li had I*
Just look, tho' loth, towards the hated chamber,
To see that all is still, and all secure, *disving hit*
And then, with heavy heart ! depart for Paris.

[Exit.]

SCENE II.

Changes to the supposed Haunted Chamber. The
COUNTESS rises from the Couch and comes forward.

The sun is rising. I will speak to Blaise,
Dismiss him to procure a close conveyance,
Ignorant for whom, or what it is design'd—
And then release the patient sufferer.
His look and manners move my inmost soul !
What deep affront ; what motive for revenge, I
Cou'd make the Count abet such cruelty !
There is a secret in this strange affair
I cannot fathom ! The afflicted victim
With Christian meekness, shudders to accuse
My guilty Lord, in spite of all he has suffer'd !

O ! Montval ! Montval ! clear this mystery
 And clear thyself, or never can my heart
 Esteem thee more !

[Goes to the Door leading to the Anti-
 Chamber and calls out.]

What Blaise ! Awake !

Ha ! gone !

Then it is time, indeed, to seek the captive,
 And to conceal him in mine own apartment,
 'Till private means are sought for his departure.

[Enters the Door leading to the Dungeon,
 and disappears.]

SCENE III.

Changes to the Dungeon.

PRISONER.]

It can't be far from morn ! This precious light,
 Precious ! because her angel hand bestow'd it.
 Is nigh extinct !—I thought I could have borne
 This short delay, with a more equal mind !
 Oh ! that I might but press her to my heart,
 And call her !—But my guardian spirit comes !

COUNTESS.

Thou venerable man, whoe'er thou art ;
 I come to lead thee to the cheerful day !
 But time is short, and circumstances press !

PRISONER,

My tutelary angel ! I obey !—

[As he is going out with her, enter LAPONT
 with a Dagger in his Hand.]

That

That villain here! Then heav'n indeed defend us!

LAPONT.

Aye! say your prayers, for you have need of them!

COUNTESS (*Advancing*)

Insolent wretch! What means this bold intrusion?

How dare you set yourself to watch my steps!

Villain avaunt! and never face me more!—

LAPONT (*Awk struck a moment, A side*)

“ What shall I falter at a woman's frown? ”

Perhaps, indeed, we ne'er may meet again!

COUNTESS.

Obdurate monster! I can guessth thy purpose!

That dagger and thy face are well agreed!

The midnight murderer, is mark'd by both!

[*As he advances towards her, she steps back, and draws a Dagger from her Bosom.*]

Affassin, look!—I have a dagger too?

But to defend, not murder innocence!

Advance one step, and I will strike thee dead!

LAPONT (*A side*)

“ My fate is fix'd, there's no refracting now! ”

Imperious woman! thus I answer thee!

[*He rushes on her, and attempting to seize the Dagger with which she attempts to strike him; in the struggle it falls.*]

COUNTESS.

Audacious ruffian!

LAPONT.

baubeb Leebai alvab LAPONT. leebi nalliv hadit

This to prove me so. ! an

[As he seizes her by the Arm, and is about
to plunge his Dagger in her Bosom, the
old Prisoner takes up that which had
fallen, and plunges it in his Side. LA-
PONT falls.]

PRISONER.

Thus righteous heav'n affests the feeble arm !

Oh ! damn'd surprise ! may hell and furies seize
thee !

Vengeance and horror ! But I will not die !
I am not prepar'd.

[Trying to rise, falls and expires.]

PRISONER.

Alas ! thou art not prepared,

To meet the justice of offended Heav'n !

COUNTESS.

Quick, let us hasten from this dreadful dungeon,

PRISONER.

My feeble limbs, exhausted by this effort,
Refuse their office !—I must rest awhile !

COUNTESS.

Nay, lean on me ! I pray you lean on me !

I will support you ! and in justice ought,

Since but for you, I were a lifeless corse !

Exeunt slowly, she supporting him.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

The supposed haunted Room, where appear the COUNT of COLMAR, the MARQUIS, MATILDA, and MARIA, in great consternation.

MATILDA.

She is not here ! I shall grow mad with terror !

MARQUIS.

Be calm my love !—Yet, yet she will be found !
Think not this fabled phantom can endanger
Your noble friend.

COLMAR.

There's something more in this
Than a mere shadow. Heard you not some noise ?

MATILDA.

Towards th' alcove ?

MARQUIS.

It was.—Again I hear it !

MATILDA.

O ! I shall faint !—Now ! now ! I hear the murmur
Of some sad voice !

COUNT.

The sound of feet approaches,
Yet nothing's seen !—Nearer ! yet nearer still !

MATILDA.

Protect me Marquis ! See !—the tapestry !

[*The tapestry is lifted up, and discovers
the COUNTESS supporting the OLD
COUNT, whose face is stained with
blood.*]

MARQUIS.

MARQUIS.

Eternal Pow'r ! what apparition's this !

TERESA.

O ! Heav'n defend us !

MATILDA.

I shall die with terror !

[As the OLD COUNT advances towards
an east window, he averts his face, ex-
claiming.]

The light ! the light !—

[And faints.]

COUNTESS.

O God ! the victim dies !

[All gather round.]

MARQUIS.

Fly, fly for succour !

[Exit MARIA.

COUNT OF COLMAR.

Can the grave restore !!

My eyes deceive me !—No !—it is my friend !—
But, ah ! how chang'd !

COUNTESS. (with great emotion)

What can you mean ?—What friend ?

COLMAR.

The Count of Montval ! Noblest, best of men !

[YOUNG COUNT enters, who, seeing his
father, stands horror-struck.]

COUNTESS.

Of Montval ?—What !—the father !—

YOUNG COUNT.

Swallow me, earth !—

COLMAR.

A TRAGEDY.

73

COLMAR.

O! yes, the father of thy noble husband!

COUNTESS.

Accur'sd the sound! and blotted be the hour,
That shews a monster—in the man I lov'd!

MARQUIS.

What dreadful misery! what horrid crime
Has buried thus alive!—

COLMAR.

The Count revives!

[OLD COUNT raises himself a little, supported by the COUNTESS and COLMAR.]

OLD COUNT.

O! I am sick!—sick unto death!—So!—so!—
Here let me lean!

[Reclining his head on the COUNTESS' bosom.]

COUNTESS.

O! live!—But try to live,
Or the most abject wretch that crawls on earth,
Is blest, compar'd with me!

OLD COUNT.

What hast thou said,

Noblest and kindest!—Ha!—my cruel son!

[YOUNG COUNT throws himself at his father's feet, the COUNTESS averting her face from him with stern horror.]

YOUNG COUNT.

Yes! from my bosom rend this barbarous
heart!

Trample my body!—Curse my impious soul!—
All is too good for such a son as me!

L

OLD

THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL,

OLD COUNT.

Do'st thou repent?

YOUNG COUNT.

Repentance is too calm!

Remorse and horror tear my bursting heart!

OLD COUNT.

Then may thy God forgive, as I forgive thee!

YOUNG COUNT.

Enchanting found! But live! O! live to bless
me!

[Enter TERESA.]

OLD COUNT.

It will not be!—I fear—it will not be!

COUNTESS (*suddenly turning, and taking the cordial from TERESA.*)

O! swallow this!—It may revive your spirits!

Think of my agonies!—My dread despair!

OLD COUNT. (*trying to drink*)

I cannot swallow!—my emotions choak me!—

This sudden change! this conflict—is too much

For age and weakness—worn with length of sorrow!

COUNTESS. (*Sternly to her husband*)

Canst thou hear this, and not be turn'd to stone!

OLD COUNT. (*to her*)

Be comforted!—Forgive, as I forgive him!

[To his son.]

Cherish the best and noblest of her sex,

And thus redeem thy injuries to me!

Quick, let me seal thy pardon ere I die!—

[Embraces him feebly.]

My good and dear old friend, your hand once more!

[Giving his hand to COLMAR.]

Daughter,

Daughter, may ev'ry blessing —

[Sinks and dies.]

COUNTESS. (Starting up wildly)

Blessing! — I! —

Can I be blest! link'd to a parricide! —

See! — see! his hands reek with a father's gore! —

O! murder! — murder! — Has thy iron heart

No touch of nature!

[Stands as if gasping for breath.]

MATILDA.

Dearest, dearest friend!

Now let your wonted firmness stand the test,

And calm your anguish!

MARQUIS.

'Tis a dreadful trial

For love and virtue, such as her's, to bear!

YOUNG COUNT.

Well may she loath a guilty wretch like me!

I dare not ev'n approach! — Yet, if my love! —

If deep remorse —

COUNTESS. (Starting from her stupor)

Thy love! — detested love! —

What can remorse, where crimes have dy'd the soul

So deep a black! — Go! — herd with cannibals,

Who feed on human flesh, and drink man's blood! —

Yet, even they, respect and love their fathers! —

YOUNG COUNT.

Soul-harrowing thought! — Yet, gracious Heav'n can pardon

The guiltiest wretch that lives beneath the skies!

COUNTESS.

O misery! madness!—All my brain's on fire!—

MATILDA.

Let reason speak to check these dangerous transports!

COUNTESS.

Talk down the tempest!—laugh away despair!

YOUNG COUNT.

Thus grov'ling at your feet, I crave for mercy!
Will nothing move!COUNTESS. (*pointing to his father's body*)

Monster!—look there!—look there!

YOUNG COUNT.

Distracting sight! Forgive me! O! forgive!

COUNT OF COLMAR.

How cou'd thy heart be harden'd to inflict
Such dreadful cruelties, on such a father!

Who cou'd excite thee to such impious conduct?

YOUNG COUNT.

The vile Lapont, by long and various arts!

Base as I was to listen to his counsel!—

Wicked as base!—work'd up my soul to all!—

COUNTESS.

“Cruel!—unnatural!—what cou'd work thy
heart,“What arts, what counsel! to such deeds of horr-
ror!—“But he has his meed!—The blood whose tainted
spots

“Defile that reverend face, sprang from his heart!

“Old as he was, and dying, yet thy father,

“To save my life, exerted strength to kill him!

YOUNG

A TRAGEDY.

77

YOUNG COUNT.

“ Tenfold accrûs'd ! dar'd he attempt thy life !
COUNTESS.

“ Is that a wonder ? — Was he not thy tutor ?

YOUNG COUNT.

“ Alas ! he early tempted me to vice !
“ Corrupted first, and then controled my mind.
“ Intemp'rate riot, and profuse expence,
“ Impell'd, at last, my father to reprove.
“ Again I err'd ; again his sterner voice
“ Check'd my career, and threaten'd punishment.
“ Impetuous, headstrong, blinded by my passions,
“ Lapont, assiduous, fann'd my causeless rage ;
“ Pictur'd my father as a gloomy tyrant,
“ And hinted there were means, wou'd I employ
 them,
“ To give me full possession of his fortune,”
Ere lingering nature clos'd his eyes in peace.

COUNTESS.

And you cou'd listen to the dangerous villain !
Cou'd calmly listen, and not drive him from you
With execrations ! —

YOUNG COUNT.

Curs'd infatuation,
That made me yield my soul to such a wretch !
For press'd by urgent debts, and urgent vice,
In an ill hour, I follow'd his base counsel.

COUNTESS.

“ O fatal hour ! — Finish thy horrid tale !

YOUNG COUNT.

“ Feigning remorse to the afflicted Count,

“ Restless

" Restless with sorrow, sorrow for my faults !
 " A soporific I administer'd,
 " Which simulating death, made all believe,
 " All but Lapont and me, my father dead.
 " Laid in his coffin, at the dead of night
 " We took him thence, and plac'd him in the dun-
 geon,
 " Which long disus'd, was only known to us ;
 " Then fill'd the leaden case with mimic weight,
 " And soon interr'd it, with funereal pomp,
 " In the same vault where lay his ancestors.—
 " By night, when all we thought were fast asleep,
 " We us'd to carry him his scanty food,
 " Wretch that I was ! And thence the tale of ghosts.
 " You know the rest.

MATILDA.

" Alas ! we know too much !
 " Wou'd I had never heard the dreadful tale !

COLMAR.

O ! my dear Montval ! what a fate was thine !

YOUNG COUNT.

Yet he forgave ! you heard how he forgave !

COUNTESS. (*groaning deeply*)

Forgave !—But can't thou ere forgive thyself ?

YOUNG COUNT.

Never, while you repulse me ! Let me thus—

[Offering to take her hand.]

COUNTESS.

Stand off !—avaunt !—Pollute me ; touch me
not !

Look at thy parricidal hands !—

Think

Think of thy parricidal heart!—
They drop with blood!—with blood!—a father's
blood!

YOUNG COUNT.

Oh! one embrace, and I shall die content!—
COUNTESS.

Anguish! distraction! Sooner I'd embrace
Deformity and age, and pestilence!
Rather wou'd clasp, within these wretched arms,
The loathsome leper, livid from the tomb,
Than taint my breast with thy abhor'd endear-
ments!

YOUNG COUNT. (*Wildly*)

Then what is left me?—

COUNTESS.

Shame! remorse! despair!
Fruitless repentance, and a lingering death!

YOUNG COUNT. (*Suddenly stabbing himself*)

No! this shall free me from the latter curse

[*Falls.*]

COUNTESS.

Montval! Montval!—O! I have murder'd him!
Murder'd my husband.

[*Throwing herself down by him.*]

MATILDA. (*Weeping*)

“ Miserable man!

“ O! that my noble friend had never known thee!

MARQUIS.

“ He is not dead! Bend him a little forward!”

COUNTESS.

My dearest lord! O yet, if life remains,
O! yet look up and hear me speak forgiveness!
Feel my embrace, and witness my despair!

I

YOUNG

80 THE CASTLE OF MONTVAL, &c.

YOUNG COUNT. (*faintly*)

Can you speak thus!—Then I shall die in peace!
Forgive me, thou Great God! all my offences!
Place me, O place me by my father's side!
That I may weep over his clay-cold hand,
And sigh upon it my last breath of life!

[*They move him to his father's body, taking whose hand, and fervently kissing it, he says.*]

Most injur'd, most rever'd! O! may thy spirit
Plead at th' eternal bar. [Dies.]

COUNTESS.

[*Clasping him closely in her arms as they try to raise her.*]

Hold off! Hold off! for I will die with him.

[*Swoons in Matilda's arms.*]

MATILDA.

Heart-rending spectacle! unhappy friend,
Exert your fortitude!

MARQUIS.

She hears you not!

So deadly is the swoon that locks her senses.
Run for some help to move these bodies hence.

[*To Teresa.*]

Convey the hapless Countess to her chamber,
Where let our tender care and friendship watch her,
Till time shall bring his balm to heal her wounded
mind!

The Curtains drops, and the Play ends.

EPilogue,
BY THE AUTHOR OF THE TRAGEDY,
AND
SPOKEN BY MRS. POWELL.

GHOST—or *no* ghost?—For *both* have stood the test—
Ghost or *no* ghost?—Pray which has pleas'd you best?—
But need I ask? Or can the *Author* wrestle,
With the enchanting ghost of Conway Castle?—
Tho' kind applauses hail'd the fancied sprite,
Transform'd into a poor old man to-night,
He dares not hope applause so long, so clear,
As almost stunn'd the spectre of last year.
But—a *propos*—pray was it not provoking
To make the Countess—nay! 'tis past all joking,—
At midnight!—in a dungeon! quite alone!
Brave an hobgoblin, and his hollow groan!—
Dear ladies! I wou'd stake my life upon it,
That neither *you*,—nor *you*,—nor *YOU* had done it!
Nay!—had some *beaux* I see, been in *her* place,
Their *hands* had not been *whiter* than their *face*.
For me!—to all the audience be it known!—
I hate, and fear *all spectres*—save my own.*
But, hence! the jest profane!—'Twere impious here,
From the sad eye, to chase the graceful tear:
No studied woes have wak'd the Poet's art,
To touch the tender pulses of the heart:
No high-wrought fiction mov'd the pitying figh,
For Kings who languish, or for Queens who cry;
But the real tale of deep domestic woe,
Has made your bosoms throb, your sorrows flow.
Too solemn, then, too *homely* is the scene,
For Epilogue to come with *flippant* mien,—
And turn to fashionable Farce a part,
Which thrills the finest fibres of the heart.
Let those who love just jesting, seek to shine;
But never may the odious task be mine.—

* Alluding to this Lady's part in the Castle Spectre.

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Ladies' Annual Register, 1792—page 130.

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